



EXCERPT 16  
DATE 3/20/11  
HB HB 456

March 10, 2011

The Honorable Terry Murphy, Chairman  
Senate Judiciary Committee  
Montana Senate  
PO Box 200500  
Helena, MT 59620-0500

RE: HB 456 – Define scope/ boundaries of human sexuality/reproduction education in public schools

Dear Chairman Murphy and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

On behalf of the Association of Montana Public Health Officials (AMPHO) which represents Montana local health departments of all sizes from the very rural to the seven most populous in the state, we urge you to vote “no” on HB 456 which seeks to limit access to comprehensive, accurate sexuality education in Montana’s local school districts.

Our local public health departments serve in an advisory role on many health issues for our school districts including asthma and diabetes management, immunizations and flu shots, tobacco prevention, physical activity and nutrition, communicable diseases, including sexually transmitted infections, and mental health screening.

Additionally, our health departments track and monitor health trends in our counties including health risk behaviors of school-aged children. We rely on information from local, state, and national data sources. We know that Montana has unacceptably high rates of teen pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and HIV/AIDS infections.

To address this challenge, AMPHO supports honest, age-appropriate, and medically accurate sex education that promotes abstinence *and* provides young people with the information they need to protect themselves. The Centers for Disease Control Prevention and other public health experts have reviewed the current research on sexuality education and affirm that age-appropriate, medically accurate discussion and information is an important component for the prevention of sexually transmitted infections and unintended pregnancies. Based on this research and others like it, our public health perspective is that the most effective way to keep teens safe from sexually transmitted infections and to prevent unintended pregnancies is through comprehensive sex education.

In summary, this bill limits local school districts from providing age-appropriate and medically accurate reproductive health education.

We urge you to not pass HB 456.

Sincerely,

Barbara J. Schneeman, Co-Chair  
AMPHO Legislative Committee